

Police-Citizen Encounters: A Content Analysis of the New York Times

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

In the past decade, negative police-citizen encounters have received a great amount of attention in both research and in the media. Although prior studies have examined the characteristics associated with negative police-citizen relationships, less is known how police-citizen encounters are portrayed in the media. Using a content analysis of stories published on police-citizen encounters in the *New York Times* during the past 15 years, this study explores the characteristics (both officer and offender) and outcomes (e.g., arrest, use of force) associated with such stories. In addition, the data collected from the content analysis will be compared to relevant statistics in the real world to determine whether the information reported on police-citizen encounters departs from official statistics.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan Intravia for advising me during this project. His help throughout this process was critical in my development of the final project.

I would also like to thank my other professors at Ball State University who taught me the basics of research that helped me throughout my project.

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Process Analysis

When I first decided what I wanted to focus my thesis on, I did not have solid idea of the work that would need to be put into this type of research. As I brainstormed topics, I narrowed my choices down to a few criminal justice issues that I was interested in. After speaking with a few faculty members in the criminal justice department, I decided to write my thesis on race-based policing in traffic stops. Starting my thesis during my sophomore year proved to be overeager, as I finished the beginning steps to the thesis and then postponed my work during my junior year. As senior year started, I resumed work on my thesis with the help of my adviser, Dr. Intravia.

My original idea for this project was to create a survey that would be administered to local law enforcement agencies and then compare those results with data observed during police ride-a-longs. The goal was to discover unintentional bias in police departments in the hopes of creating evidence that while police officers may not commit acts of racial profiling, they inadvertently commit acts of race-based policing. However, after some research and discussion, we decided that there would be too much bias in that sort of survey which might provide insufficient results. So we decided to change the format of the thesis so that the results would be more unbiased.

Rather than a survey and observing police officer behaviors in person, Dr. Intravia suggested I create a content analysis of police-citizen encounters reported in newspapers. I felt that this would be a more manageable goal because I felt overwhelmed by the scope of the work the original plan would require. This new goal would allow me to better use the skills I learned throughout my undergraduate journey as well. I could research topics related to criminal justice to learn more about current, pertinent, events while also expanding my skills as a researcher.

As I searched through a few thousand articles I felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of articles needed to find the information that I wanted to include. However, as I got the first section done, I felt like a stronger researcher, and the current project would provide a fuller result for the thesis than the original project. As I moved into the data section of the project, Dr. Intravia helped me learn to code data using different software, which is a skill that will continue to help me in graduate school, as well as in real world applications.

Upon working through the written portion of my thesis, I continued to learn more about the field of criminal justice as I researched previous literature and found reasons for the data to appear as it had. From the knowledge I had prior to starting this endeavor, I grasped the concept of race-based policing but was unaware of its extent or application in real world scenarios. As I completed my project, I did not uncover the exact results that I was expecting, but a similar outcome that after finalizing the project makes more sense in the context of the big picture of this project.

Introduction

The purpose of law enforcement is to protect and serve. One of the ways officers serve in a community is by interacting with citizens and assisting their needs. These interactions are meant to improve community relations, help citizens with problems they might have, and ensure order is maintained. Police and citizens encounter each other for many reasons—both crime-related and non-crime-related. Of the approximate 62.9 million U.S. residents that had contact with the police in 2011, almost half of them (approximately 31 million) reported the contact was police-initiated (Langton & Durose, 2013, p. 1). Realistically, the likelihood of all these encounters being positive are unlikely. During every police-citizen encounter, there is a chance for negative events to occur, which may include, but not limited to, harassment, verbal/physical altercations, use of excessive/lethal force, and/or other police/citizen misconduct. These negative police encounters, as seen in well-documented cases such as Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, form a divide between law enforcement and society, which creates a greater chance for more negative consequences in the future. Further, as more people learn about negative law enforcement encounters through mass media and social interactions, their attitudes and perceptions directed toward the police and criminal justice may become more negative in fashion.

Mass media is a primary source for citizens to learn about crime and justice-related content. Scholars have long suggested that the media may play an important role in shaping citizens' attitudes and perceptions directed toward crime and justice (Surette, 2007). It is not surprising that negative police-citizen encounters are more likely to be reported in the media than positive encounters because they are more popular and/or receive more attention among consumers (Harcup & O'Neil, 2001). News coverage on police-citizen encounters may impact

how individuals perceive the police and criminal justice system. In areas with a high number of police-citizen problems, individuals are more likely to rate police effectiveness lower compared to other areas because they perceive the police are not properly fulfilling their role (Dowler, 2002, p. 232). Although the media is more likely to report on negative police-citizen stories as opposed to positive police-citizen stories, negative encounters are still a concern for law enforcement agencies.

Studying how a negative police-citizen encounter may be manifested and reported will aid future law enforcement organizations to help train officers to interact with citizens in a more positive manner. Increasing trust of the police will start with the community believing that officers are doing their job properly and justly for all individuals, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, or age. For example, data reveals that both African Americans and Hispanics hold more negative attitudes toward police officers than whites (Lai & Zhao, 2010, p. 689). Lowering the number of negative encounters between police and minority groups will alleviate the stress that law enforcement and society currently struggle with, as more occurrences of police use of lethal force occurs (and is reported). Investigating why officers choose/are forced to use deadly force may help prevent officers from entering these life or death situations. Discovering what factors increase the chance of injury during a police-citizen encounter may also help to educate both law enforcement and the public on how to avoid these risk factors. The first step in figuring out the risk factors is by determining who is at risk of negative police-citizen encounters.

In the current study, a content analysis was conducted on police-citizen encounters. Drawing from a 15-year period of stories involving police and citizens published in the *New York Times* (NYT), the information reported in the news articles was used to explore how stories involving police-citizen encounters are portrayed in relation to key characteristics such as

race/ethnicity, gender, crimes reported, and outcomes associated with such encounters (e.g., death, arrests). Before presenting the results of the current study, I will first discuss the research associated with police-citizen encounters and attitudes directed toward the police. From there, I will highlight the recent body of research involving the police and racial bias. Following this, I will detail how the media influences individuals' attitudes and perceptions directed toward law enforcement officers.

Previous Research on Police-Citizen Encounters

From a broader lens, numerous studies have looked at the connection between community characteristics and police actions to better understand negative police-citizen encounters. Previous research suggests that community context plays an important role in influencing negative encounters between police personnel and citizens (Brunson, 2007; Kane, 2002; Klinger, 1997; Weitzer, 1999). For example, a study conducted from a mail survey of a random sample of 1,681 residents from a metropolitan city revealed that peoples' perceived levels of collective efficacy partially shape the level of trustworthiness people will afford to the police (Nix, Wolfe, Rojek, & Kaminski, 2014). Furthermore, studies conducted at the neighborhood-level illustrate that individuals residing in lower-income minority neighborhoods, compared to those living in upper-income white neighborhoods, are more likely to come into contact with police, resulting in a lower perception of trust during police-citizen encounters (Alpert & Dunham, 1988; Apple & O'Brien, 1983; Jacob, 1971; Klinger, 1997; Schuman & Gruenberg, 1972; Smith, 1986; Weitzer, 1995). Factors that could increase the chance of negative police encounters in a neighborhood include unjustified street stops, verbal abuse and harassment, and use of excessive force/rough treatment (Engel, Smith, & Cullen, 2012; Kane, 2005; Terrill & Reisig, 2003; Weitzer, 1999). Residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods face

more opportunities for potentially adverse police-citizen encounters because of the perceived higher levels of crime in these neighborhoods, which partially explains the lower level of police effectiveness. As residents witness negative encounters, they may presume that law enforcement is less effective.

In addition to certain types of neighborhood contexts influencing attitudes and perceptions toward the police, another area of research examined police-citizen encounters at the individual level, particularly through traffic stops. Results from this body of work have identified reasons why police-citizen interactions during traffic stops may cause less favorable attitudes towards law enforcement. The behavior of the police and the personal characteristics of the officer and the driver play a role during these encounters (Cox, Pease, Miller, & Tyson, 2001; Engel & Calnon, 2004; Langton & Durose, 2013; Taniguchi, Hendrix, Levin-Rector, Aagaard, Strom, & Zimmer, 2017). In 2011, researchers examined the data reported in the Police-Public Contact Survey (PPCS), which analyzed traffic and street stops by law enforcement. The findings showed more African American drivers (13%) compared to white and Hispanic drivers (10%, respectively) were pulled over during a traffic stop during their most recent contact with the police. Along with that data, white drivers were both searched and ticketed at lower rates during a stop than African American and Hispanic drivers (Langton & Durose, 2013, p. 1).

Analysis of almost 20,000 traffic stops in the Durham (NC) Police Department have shown that a portion of African American drivers that were stopped was related to officer-level factors such as geographic area, unit assignment, or individual decision-making (Taniguchi et al., 2017). Using data from the Police-Public Contact Survey (PPCS), Engel and Calnon (2004) found African American drivers were more likely to be stopped compared to white drivers. Engel and Calnon also found that the race of the driver resulted in different outcomes during a

traffic stop (citation, arrest, use of force, and searches). For instance, African American and Hispanic drivers (57.3% & 62.6%, respectively) were more likely to receive a traffic citation than white drivers (49.9%). In addition, minority drivers were more than two times likely to be searched compared to white drivers (5.4% white, 10.9% African American, 11.2% Hispanic, and 6.5% other). Regarding arrests, only 2.6% of white drivers were arrested, which was lower than both African American and Hispanic drivers (5.2% & 4.2%, respectively). Lastly, similar conclusions were drawn with use of force. In fact, minority drivers were more likely to experience police use of force than whites (2.7% whites, 6.7% African Americans, & 5.4% Hispanics) (p. 69).

Overall, previous research illustrates that various factors, including community context and race/ethnicity, influence negative police-citizen interactions. Another related body of research illustrates that macro- and micro-level characteristics influence attitudes directed toward the police. Research in this area is discussed next.

Research on Attitudes Directed toward the Police

A significant amount of research has also examined how macro- and micro-level characteristics affect attitudes directed toward the police. Regarding community context, an increasing amount of literature has shown that neighborhood conditions play a key role in influencing the perceptions and attitudes directed toward the police (Alpert & Dunham, 1988; Macdonald & Stokes, 2006; Reisig & Parks, 2000). In fact, previous efforts show individuals living in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to hold negative opinions of law enforcement personnel (Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Weitzer, 2000). For example, Reisig and Parks (2000) conducted a study of 5,631 individuals residing in 58 Indianapolis neighborhoods; the results revealed citizens who perceived their neighborhoods to

have higher levels of crime, incivilities, and to be less safe were more likely to display negative attitudes towards law enforcement. Similar studies have found that community context is an important predictor in forming perceptions toward injustice in general (Anderson, 1999; Hagan & Albonetti, 1982; Henderson & Cullen, 1997; Jacob, 1971). In a study of 239 residents in Cincinnati, Ohio, the results showed perceptions of injustice were strongest in the least affluent African American communities (Henderson & Cullen, 1997). When controlling for other extemporaneous factors, including race, the results showed that the neighborhood context influences the general attitude toward the police. While none of the studies provided a direct relationship between disadvantaged neighborhoods and police efficacy, they all suggested that neighborhood context is important in shaping general negative attitudes towards law enforcement.

Previous research also shows race/ethnicity plays an imperative role in shaping negative attitudes directed toward the police. For instance, compared to white citizens, African Americans have been found to have less favorable perceptions of police (Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree, 2001; Weitzer & Tuch, 1999 and 2002; Jacob, 1971), and more likely to experience abuse (Weitzer, 1999), racial discrimination (Leiber, Nalla, & Farnworth, 1998; Weitzer, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005), and harassment (Browning, Cullen, Cao, Kopache, & Stevenson, 1994; Webb & Marshall, 1995). Findings from a study of 1,225 respondents revealed African American respondents have far greater dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system in general than do white respondents (Weitzer & Tuch, 1999, p. 498). Weitzer and Tuch (1999) found more than 7 in 10 blacks, but fewer than 4 in 10 whites, believe African Americans receive harsher treatments than whites. Furthermore, over 70% of African Americans believe police protection is worse in African American neighborhoods, while less than half of white

respondents believe the same is true. When examining the confidence of citizens in law enforcement, only 34.2% of African Americans express a “great deal or fair amount” of confidence in police to treat African Americans and whites equally, while 71.6% of whites believed the same amount of confidence on this issue. Weitzer and Tuch found regarding racism among police, 80% of African American respondents believed this was “very or fairly common”, with only 56.4% of white respondents expressed the same amount of belief (p. 498-499). The consistent findings illustrate that race/ethnicity is a major factor in influencing attitudes towards police.

The Role of Procedural Justice

One area of research that has shown to improve citizens’ attitudes toward the police involves the concept of procedural justice. Defined as influencing cooperative behavior based on how decisions are made (Tyler, 2009, p. 1), the use of procedural justice by law enforcement has been shown to have a positive influence on the attitude towards police (Engel, 2005; Mazerolle, Antrobus, Bennett, & Tyler, 2013; Nix et al., 2014; Sahin, Braga, Apel, & Brunson, 2017; Wolfe, Nix, Kaminski, & Rojek, 2015). While procedural justice has been shown to have a favorable influence on public perceptions, some factors have been shown to change the results of its influence. Factors such as race (Brunson & Gau, 2011; Engel, 2005; Johnson, Wilson, Maguire, & Lowrey-Kinberg, 2017; Madon, Murphy, & Sargeant, 2015) and offender demeanor (Nix, Pickett, Wolfe, & Campbell, 2017) have revealed adverse impacts with the public’s perception of procedural justice. For example, Nix and colleagues (2017) found that demeanor plays a role in procedural justice effectiveness. Specifically, police officers stated that it was less important to use procedural justice practices with disrespectful suspects.

In addition, procedural justice evaluations are a primary source of trust in the police and is vitally important in establishing trust from the public (Nix et al., 2014). While procedural justice has been proven to increase positive attitudes towards law enforcement, preconceived notions based on past experience may limit the amount of change that procedural justice can impact the overall attitude towards law enforcement. For example, a recent study of 440 adults (18 years and older) from eight states within Australia found that preconceived notions of police impacted their belief about police encounters regardless of the outcome of their encounter (Sargeant, Murphy, & Madon, 2018).

In order to understand how procedural justice can influence the outcome of traffic stops, a study was conducted to examine how race plays an important role in procedural justice (Johnson et al., 2017). The study by Johnson and colleagues randomly assigned 546 participants to view one of six different videos depicting a simulated traffic stop. The videos featured one of three different procedural justice responses (positive, negative, or neutral) and two different driver conditions based on race (white or African American). The results showed that people that watched the positive procedural justice video indicated more willingness to cooperate, a stronger feeling of obligation to obey, and a greater sense of trust and confidence in the officer compared to those that viewed the neutral or negative condition (p. 1202). The study also found two major race-based findings. Specifically, African American respondents in the study were more likely to assess the police less favorably than non-African American respondents, and when the driver was white, the positive effects of procedural justice were larger (p. 1203).

The previous research reveals the factors, such as race and community characteristics, that influence public perceptions toward law enforcement. Yet, prior efforts suggest that one promising way to combat negative attitudes toward the police is through the use of procedural

justice. Based on previous findings, procedural justice practices have been shown to increase the favorability of law enforcement by citizens.

Current Research on Police and Racial Bias

Current studies have shown correlations between police and race-based policing, based on current events. The recent studies have shown correlations between police use of force and racial characteristics (ACLU, 2014; Baker, 2010; Bui & Cox, 2016; Cordell, Reynoso, & Tevrizian, 2016; Correll, Wittenbrink, Park, Judd, Sadler, & Keese, 2007; Department of Justice, 2015; Jackman, 2016; LaFraniere & Lehen, 2015; Lowery, 2016; Mapping Police Violence, 2017; Police Accountability Task Force, 2016; Ross, 2015; Williams, 2016). Based on previous research about police killings of unarmed Americans, a study by the University of California showed that on average, the probability of being African American, unarmed, and shot by police is roughly 3.49 times higher than the probability of being white, unarmed, and shot by the police (Ross, 2015). In another independent analysis, the only significant factor in predicting someone being shot by police was whether they were African American (Lowery, 2016).

When officers determine who to stop, regardless of other factors, recent studies show that race plays the most significant factor, especially concerning African Americans (ACLU, 2014; Cordell et al., 2016; Department of Justice, 2015; LaFraniere & Lehen, 2015; Police Accountability Task Force, 2016). Three studies conducted on the police use of nonlethal force found that African Americans are more likely to have force used against them than whites, even after studies had accounted for racial disparities in crime (Bui & Cox, 2016; Jackman, 2016; Williams, 2016). Race-based policing is not exclusive to the civilian population. A task force from 2010 found that 9 out of 10 off-duty officers that were killed by other officers since 1982 were African American or Latino (Baker, 2010). Although not exhaustive, these recent studies

have shown that minorities, especially African Americans, are more likely than whites to experience negative interactions with law enforcement. A recent project created by academic personnel at Stanford University helps to provide a more holistic idea of the data available regarding police-citizen encounters. I turn to this project next.

Stanford Policing Project

While a comprehensive national archive of police-citizen encounters does not currently exist, the Stanford Open Policing Project began collecting and standardizing data on both vehicle and pedestrian stops from law enforcement departments across the country starting in 2015. The project is a collaboration between the Stanford Computational Journalism Lab and the Stanford School of Engineering. Currently 130 million records from 31 state police agencies has been gathered, as well as data collected from stops conducted by law enforcement agencies in major cities. The data composed of more than 60 million state patrol stops found significant racial disparities in policing.

The results show that after controlling for driver's age and gender, African American drivers are stopped at higher rates than white drivers. African American and Hispanic drivers are more likely to receive a ticket, be searched, and arrested than white drivers, after accounting for age, gender, and location. To determine if discrimination occurs in policing, the researchers created the threshold test to examine information of both search and hit rates. The results showed that police require less suspicion to search African American and Hispanic drivers than whites, indicating evidence of discrimination. While the data is not exhaustive, when compiled, it does allow researchers to determine evidence of discrimination in policing. To increase the validity of the project, more states would need to compile data on traffic stops, which could then be added

to the project's gathered data. The greater compilation will provide more definitive results on the evidence of discrimination in policing.

In summary, a host of research illustrates that race-based policing is a problem in law enforcement. Minority members are being policed at rates higher than the equivalency of their total in the population. In the next section, I discuss how the media portrays the police. Research in this domain provides another perspective on how police-citizen relationships are portrayed and consumed by individuals.

The Influence of Mass Media Portraying Police-Citizen Encounters

The mass media is a primary source for crime related stories and events. In fact, scholars suggest that citizens receive most of their knowledge about crime and the criminal justice system from mass media (Surette, 2007). According to cultivation theory, the more that individuals consume media, the more likely they are to align their attitudes and perceptions with what is depicted in media content (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). For example, if the media disproportionately reports on negative police-citizen stories as opposed to positive police-citizen stories, individuals' attitudes and perceptions toward the police may become more negative because of the content consumed from sources of media.

Recognizing that mass media is a primary source of crime and justice information, research has identified patterns associated with crime-related content covered in media outlets. Overall, previous studies highlight that regardless of the media source (e.g., television, newspaper, radio), crime is distorted in news coverage because these outlets disproportionately publicized violent (or serious) events over non-violent (or non-serious) events (Lipschultz & Hilt, 2014). This is not surprising given that news value theory illustrates that the probability of

an event being reported by the news is based on a series of news factors such as frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons, or reference to something negative (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). In 2001, Harcup and O'Neil created an updated set of news values based on the original criteria by Galtung and Ruge: the power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up, and newspaper agenda. Thus, based on news value theory, stories involving positions of power (e.g., the police) and being negative in nature (e.g., negative police-citizen encounter) provides more news worthy stories for consumers.

Based on what is reported in the news and media, there is a host of research illustrating that media consumption impacts consumers' attitudes and perceptions toward law enforcement. Weitzer and Tuch (2004) found that individuals who consumed media reports on police misconduct were more likely to believe that police misconduct was common. Similarly, Dowler and Zawilski (2007) found that individuals who consumed television news more frequently were more likely to believe that police misconduct occurred on a regular basis. Other studies, however, have found that media consumption does not impact attitudes or perceptions directed toward the police (Dowler, 2003). In a recent assessment examining the effects of multiple types of media consumption (television, entertainment, online), Intravia, Wolff, and Piquero (2017) found that individuals who read news online were more likely to have negative attitudes toward police legitimacy. The authors did not find other types of media consumption (e.g., television, the Internet) to impact consumers' attitudes toward the police.

Current Study

Previous research has provided evidence that race-based policing exists (Engel & Calnon, 2004, Langton & Durose, 2013, Taniguchi et al., 2017). However, studies differ on the extent of this problem. Some of the issues come from bias in the data that is provided by law enforcement departments who attempt to avoid a negative connotation of race-based policing by their department. In order to help avoid this bias, the current study looks at police-citizen encounters as they are reported in the New York Times during a 15-year time frame (from 2002 through 2017). By examining articles that are reported in the news, the data provided will not be biased in an attempt to hide practices of race-based policing or reporting.

Previous research has shown evidence of race-based policing, often comes in the form of more minority members, specifically African Americans, encountering police than whites. To create a better picture of this problem, free of the bias of data reported from law enforcement agencies, the current study should find similar evidence that race-based policing exists. By examining articles from the New York Times, and the arguments embedded in news value theory, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H1: News events involving police-citizen encounters will more likely feature stories involving suspects/citizens that are African American as opposed to being white.

H2: News events involving police-citizen encounters will more likely feature stories involving police officers that are white as opposed to being non-white.

H3: News events involving police-citizen encounters will more likely feature stories involving outcomes where the encounters are negative (suspects/citizens are killed or arrested by the police) as opposed to being positive (suspects/citizens are not killed or arrested by the police).

H4: News events involving police-citizen killings will more likely feature suspects/citizens that are minority as opposed to being white.

Methodology

Content Analysis

A content analysis is the study of what messages convey through some type of communicable form. Any form of communication can be used to form a content analysis. Some common examples are books, magazines, speeches, television programs, and newspapers to name a few. Any content analysis is created using a system of coding to organize the information that the analyst is examining. When coding a content analysis, two forms of content can be searched for, manifest content (i.e. the surface content) or the latent content (i.e. the underlying meaning). As the analyst, it is important to create a code based on what information will be pertinent to the results of the analysis. By creating a code to organize the information, the analyst can more easily identify relevant information that can be used to explain the content found.

Sample

This analysis focused on one newspaper, the New York Times. Within a 15-year timeframe starting on October 1, 2002, articles were reviewed based on the search parameters during this time frame. Search parameters included five key terms: (1) police shootings, (2) police bias, (3) police discrimination, (4) police traffic stops, and (5) police brutality. In addition to the key terms, the sample focused on the 15-year time frame (October 1, 2002 through January 29, 2018), and location (only articles of events within the United States). Using these specific search functions, articles were then examined and determined if enough pertinent information was present to include in the current content analysis. Information such as police characteristics,

offender characteristics, time of day, location, type of crime, and outcome of the encounter were all recorded using Microsoft Excel. Due to articles varying in the amount of information presented (e.g., police characteristics, offender characteristics, type of crime), additional searches using the Internet were conducted to provide any missing information that was important for the current analysis. While some data might have been inferred based on the articles, only data explicitly stated was included to avoid the risk of false assumptions.

In order to provide a more complete picture of the results, some articles (44) were supplemented through the inclusion of information (at least one category of information) related to the original articles. This included searching the internet based on the information provided in the NYT articles to find articles from different news sources about the same incident. While different news sources may have reported the same incident, the wording they chose could have indicated one of the categories of information that the NYT did not. For example, finding officer personal characteristics was the most difficult categories because many articles focused on the offender. However, if the articles mentioned the name of the officer involved, it became possible to search for that officer to retrieve more information about the event. Overall, based on the aforementioned parameters, 100 articles were found based on the key words and containing the appropriate information.

Unit of Analysis

This study will focus on three units of analysis. The first being the individual, i.e. their personal characteristics as provided in the articles. Characteristics of both the offender(s) and officer(s) will be analyzed. Characteristics including race/ethnicity, gender, and age will be used. Along with this unit of analysis, it will also focus on social artifacts because while the information recorded deals with individual level characteristics, it was obtained from a social

artifact (i.e. a newspaper). The third unit to be analyzed will be the social interactions between officer(s) and offender(s). This analysis will focus on the outcome of the police-citizen encounters (arrest/no arrest or killed/not killed).

Coding Schemes

As noted above, using Microsoft Excel, the following information was retrieved from the news articles: officer characteristics including race/ethnicity, gender, and age; offender/suspect characteristics including race/ethnicity, gender, and age; time of day the event occurred; location of the event; and type of violation reported; if the offender was arrested or not; and if the offender was killed or not. The determination of violation type was at the discretion of the coders based on the information provided to determine which category the violation would fall under. If the violation did not properly fall under one of the first four categories, it was assigned to the “other” category for any type of violation not clearly defined.

After the details were recorded in Excel, the data was coded using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to allow coders to examine the data more precisely and create tables to display the information. Variables were coded using numerical values to represent different characteristics. For example, race/ethnicity was coded as 1=white, 2=African American, 3=Hispanic, 4=other, and 99 was a constant used to mean data was missing. For both officer and offender gender, the data was coded as 0=female, 1=male, and 2=male and female. This was included because for some incidents there was both female and male officers or female and male offenders. Five of the categories were coded without any variables to represent the information because its numeric value was sufficient for coding: (1) year of incident, (2) offender age, (3) number of offenders, (4) officer age, and (5) number of officers. Three other categories were coded based on the ranges mentioned in the previous paragraph. Type of

violation was coded as 1=violent, 2=property, 3=public order, 4=traffic, and 5=other. Time of incident was coded as 1=8am to 3:59pm, 2=4pm to 11:59pm, and 3=12am to 7:59am. Location of incident was coded as 1=urban (50,000+), 2=suburban (2,500-49,999), and 3=rural (1-2,499). If the offender was arrested or not and if the offender was killed or not used the same variables, 0=no and 1=yes.

After coding all of the data using SPSS, the coded information was then inputted into STATA, a software program that was used to run descriptive statistics.

Coders and Reliability

The coders include two individuals: one undergraduate student and the thesis project adviser. Reliability was assessed by the adviser by randomly examining a portion (ten percent) of the articles provided after the undergraduate coder finished the coding of the 100 articles to determine agreement on the original coding. Reliability of the original information was based on the assumption that information included in a reputable source, i.e. the New York Times, was all reliable. Information gathered from outside sources, to increase the thoroughness of the results, was checked with at least two different sources before being added to the data in the Excel spreadsheet.

Analyses

The first set of analysis examined the frequencies and percentages for demographic characteristics of officers and offenders (see Tables 1 and 2, respectively). These two tables were used to examine the percentages of characteristics that were reported in the articles to later compare with other data sets, such as the total number of offenders, based on personal characteristics i.e. race/ethnicity, reported in the media compared to their actual total in the

population. The second set of analysis examined the frequencies and percentages for each category of crime (see Table 3). This table was split into five categories depending on the type of crime, to observe the likelihood of crime types to be reported in the media. The third set of analysis examined the frequencies and percentages for offender outcomes (see Table 4). This table was split into arrests/no arrest and killed/not killed.

The fourth set of analysis examined offender outcomes based on police and offender demographics (see Tables 5 and 6, respectively). Frequencies for the arrest/no arrest and killed/not killed outcomes of the offender were examined separately based on demographics of officers and offenders. The fifth set of analysis examined offender outcomes based on time of day/location and crime reported (see Tables 7 and 8, respectively). Frequencies for the arrest/no arrest and killed/not killed outcomes of the offender were examined using these three categories of information provided. The sixth set of analysis compared the data found in the current study with national data reported in the 2017 Police Violence Report (see Tables 9 and 10). These data sets are compared to the results of the information found in the articles, to the information compiled through reporting of police-citizen encounters in the United States.

Results

Table 1 illustrates the frequencies and percentages for the demographic characteristics of police officers. As shown in Table 1, the vast majority of officers reported in the news stories were males (80.00%) compared to females (2.00%). Regarding race/ethnicity, most of the officers were identified as white (47.00%), followed by African American (5.00%), Hispanic (4.00%) and other (1.00%). Lastly, with respect to age, the majority of the officers were between 21-30 years old (19.00%) and 31-39 years old (21.00%). Officers in the age range of

41-49 years old and 50 years or older consisted of 7.00% and 1.00% of the officers reported, respectively.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages for Demographic Characteristics of Police Officers

Variables	Observations	Percentage
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	80	80.00
Female	2	2.00
Missing	18	18.00
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
White	47	47.00
African American	5	5.00
Hispanic	4	4.00
Other	1	1.00
Missing	43	43.00
<u>Age</u>		
21-30	19	19.00
31-39	21	21.00
41-49	7	7.00
50 or over	1	1.00
Missing	52	52.00

Table 2 illustrates the frequencies and percentages for the demographic characteristics of offenders. Similar to the demographic characteristics of officers, the majority of individuals reported in the news were male (83.00%) compared to females (14.00%). Regarding race/ethnicity, the majority of offenders were African American (70.00%), followed by Hispanics (11.00%), whites (6.00%), and other (3.00%). Finally, in relation to age, the two largest categories for offenders were the 21-30-year-old range and 20 or under, 30.00% and 22.00%, respectively. Offenders in the age range of 41-49 years old were the third most common at 15.00%, followed by 50 or over (14.00%), and 31-39 years old (13.00%).

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages for Demographic Characteristics of Citizens/Offenders

Variables	Observations	Percentage
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	83	83.00
Female	14	14.00
Male and Female	3	3.00
Missing	0	0.00
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
White	6	6.00
African American	70	70.00
Hispanic	11	11.00
Other	3	3.00
Missing	10	10.00
<u>Age</u>		
20 or under	22	22.00
21-30	30	30.00
31-39	13	13.00
41-49	15	15.00
50 or over	14	14.00
Missing	6	6.00

Based on the available data, the most common offender during the 15-year period was a 21-30-year-old African American male, and the most common officer was a 31-39 year old white male. It is important to note that due to missing data, the gender of police officers is missing 18.00%, race/ethnicity is missing 43.00%, and age of officers is missing 52.00%. Also of note, missing information of offenders includes 10.00% of race/ethnicity and 6.00% of offender's ages. These limitations will be discussed in the discussion section.

According to the data in Table 3, which outlines the frequencies and percentages of offender's crimes, the two most common types of crime violations reported by the news were public order and violent crimes, at 27.00% and 26.00%, respectively. The third most common

crime was traffic crimes at 18.00%, followed by property crimes (16.00%), and other crimes (10.00%). Of the crimes reported by the news, 3.00% were not included with the information.

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages for Citizen/Offender Crime

Variables	Observations	Percentage
<u>Crime/Violation</u>		
Violent	26	26.00
Property	16	16.00
Public Order	27	27.00
Traffic	18	18.00
Other	10	10.00
Missing	3	3.00

Table 4 illustrates the frequencies and percentages of outcomes of the police-citizen encounter. Regarding arrests, the offender was more likely to not be arrested than arrested (79.00% compared to 21.00%, respectively). The offender was more likely to be killed than not killed (67.00% compared to 33.00%, respectively). The relationship between arrests and death of the offender will be discussed below.

Table 4: Frequencies and Percentages for Police-Citizen Encounter Outcome

Variables	Observations	Percentage
<u>Citizen/Offender Arrested</u>		
Yes	21	21.00
No	79	79.00
Missing	0	0.00
<u>Citizen/Offender Killed</u>		
Yes	67	67.00
No	33	33.00
Missing	0	0.00

Table 5 illustrates the frequencies for the offender's arrest/death based on police demographics. Regarding officer gender, both males (80.00%) and females (100.00%) were more likely not to arrest the offender. Still related to officer gender, both males (71.25%) and

females (100.00%) were more likely to kill the offender. Regarding officer race/ethnicity, each category was more likely to not arrest the offender. Regarding arrests compared to no arrests, based on officer race/ethnicity, African Americans and the other category were most likely (100.00%), followed by whites (80.85%), and Hispanics (75.00%). For the offender being killed compared to not killed, based on officer race/ethnicity, African Americans and the other category were still the highest (100.00 for each, respectively), followed by Hispanics (75.00%), and whites (70.21%).

Table 5: Frequencies for Offender/Citizen Arrested or Killed by Police Demographics

Variables	Frequency (%)		Frequency (%)	
	Arrested	Not Arrested	Killed	Not Killed
<u>Police Officer Gender</u>				
Male	16 (20.00%)	64 (80.00%)	57 (71.25%)	23 (28.75%)
Female	0 (0.00%)	2 (100.00%)	2 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Missing	3 (20.00%)	12 (80.00%)	7 (46.67%)	8 (53.33%)
<u>Police Officer Race/Ethnicity</u>				
White	9 (19.15%)	38 (80.85%)	33 (70.21%)	14 (29.79%)
African American	0 (0.00%)	5 (100.00%)	5 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Hispanic	1 (25.00%)	3 (75.00%)	3 (75.00%)	1 (25.00%)
Other	0 (0.00%)	1 (100.00%)	1 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Missing	9 (23.68%)	29 (76.32%)	23 (60.53%)	15 (39.47%)

Table 6 also illustrates frequencies of offender's arrest/death, but this table focuses on the demographics of the offenders. Regarding offender's gender, all three categories were more likely to not be arrested than arrested, with male and female offenders being the most likely (100.00%), followed by males (80.72% and females (64.29%). Whether the offender was killed or not, only males were more likely to be killed (72.29%), while it was more likely to not be killed than killed for both females (57.14%) and male and female (66.67%). It is important to note that the male and female category is not a combination of the male and female categories, but a separate third category in which articles mention both a male and female offender.

Regarding the race/ethnicity of offenders, all categories were more likely to not be arrested compared to being arrested with Hispanics being the most likely to not be arrested (90.91%), followed by whites (83.33% African Americans (75.71%), and other (66.67%). Regarding if an offender is killed or not, based on race/ethnicity, all categories of offenders were more likely to be killed with Hispanics first (72.73%), followed by both whites and other (66.67%), and African Americans (62.86%). Regarding this Table, it is important to note that while the percentage of African Americans who were killed was the lowest based on race/ethnicity, it was also the most reported (70 articles compared to the next highest being 11 articles for Hispanics).

Table 6: Frequencies for Offender/Citizen Arrested or Killed by Offender/Citizen Demographics

Variables	Frequency (%)		Frequency (%)	
	Arrested	Not Arrested	Killed	Not Killed
<u>Offender/Citizen Gender</u>				
Male	16 (19.28%)	67 (80.72%)	60 (72.29%)	23 (27.71%)
Female	5 (35.71%)	9 (64.29%)	6 (42.86%)	8 (57.14%)
Male and Female	0 (0.00%)	3 (100.00%)	1 (33.33%)	2 (66.67%)
Missing	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
<u>Offender/Citizen Race/Ethnicity</u>				
White	1 (16.67%)	5 (83.33%)	4 (66.67%)	2 (33.33%)
African American	17 (24.29%)	53 (75.71%)	44 (62.86%)	26 (37.14%)
Hispanic	1 (9.09%)	10 (90.91%)	8 (72.73%)	3 (27.27%)
Other	1 (33.33%)	2 (66.67%)	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)
Missing	1 (10.00%)	9 (90.00%)	9 (90.00%)	1 (10.00%)

Regarding Tables 4, 5, and 6, there is a pattern between arrest of offenders and the death of offenders. Most of the data regarding arrests mirrors the data for death of offenders. For example, in Table 4, the majority of offenders were not arrested, while the majority of offenders were killed. This is because the death of an offender, as reported in the article, would impact their arrest. If the offender from the article was killed, then they would not be arrested after being

killed. So, as more articles reported that offenders were killed, it would also increase the number of articles found where the offender was not arrested.

Table 7 illustrates the frequencies of offender arrests/deaths based on time of day and location. Based on time of day, offenders were more likely to not be arrested than arrested during all three-time periods with most likely to not be arrested from 4pm-11:59pm (88.00% followed by 12am-7:59am (76.39%), and 8am-3:59pm (66.67%). Offenders were more likely to be killed than not killed during all three time periods with the most likely from 4pm-11:59pm (72.00%), followed by 12am-7:59am (65.38%), and 8am-3:59pm (52.38%). Regarding location, offenders were more likely to not be arrested than arrested in all three locations with most likely in rural locations (100.00%), followed by urban locations (82.14% and suburban locations (53.85%). In two categories, the offender was more likely to be killed than not killed with offenders most likely to be killed in urban locations (70.24%) followed by rural locations (66.67%). Offenders in suburban locations were more likely to not be killed compared to killed (53.85%).

**Table 7: Frequencies for Offender/Citizen
Arrested or Killed by Time of Day and Location**

Variables	Frequency (%)		Frequency (%)	
	Arrested	Not Arrested	Killed	Not Killed
<u>Time of Day</u>				
8am-3:59pm	7 (33.33%)	14 (66.67%)	11 (52.38%)	10 (47.62%)
4pm-11:59pm	3 (12.00%)	22 (88.00%)	18 (72.00%)	7 (28.00%)
12am-7:59am	7 (26.92%)	55 (76.39%)	17 (65.38%)	9 (34.62%)
<u>Location</u>				
Urban	15 (17.86%)	69 (82.14%)	59 (70.24%)	25 (29.76%)
Suburban	6 (46.15%)	7 (53.85%)	6 (46.15%)	7 (53.85%)
Rural	0 (0.00%)	3 (100.00%)	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)

Table 8 illustrates the frequencies of offenders' arrests/deaths based on the crime reported. Regarding arrests, offenders were more likely to not be arrested than arrested in all five

categories with violent crimes the most likely to not be arrested (92.31%), followed by traffic (83.33%), other (80.00%), public order (74.07%), and property (62.50%). Excluding property crimes, the other four categories of crime were more likely that the offender was killed than not killed with violent crimes being the most likely (88.46%), followed by other (70.00%), public order (62.96%), and traffic (61.11%). Offenders involved in property crimes were more likely to not be killed than killed (62.50%).

**Table 8: Frequencies for Offender/Citizen
Arrested or Killed by Violation/Crime Reported**

Variables	Frequency (%)		Frequency (%)	
	Arrested	Not Arrested	Killed	Not Killed
<u>Violation/Crime</u>				
Violent	2 (7.69%)	24 (92.31%)	23 (88.46%)	3 (11.54%)
Property	6 (37.50%)	10 (62.50%)	6 (37.50%)	10 (62.50%)
Public Order	7 (25.93%)	20 (74.07%)	17 (62.96%)	10 (37.04%)
Traffic	3 (16.67%)	15 (83.33%)	11 (61.11%)	7 (38.89%)
Other	2 (20.00%)	8 (80.00%)	7 (70.00%)	3 (30.00%)

Table 9 illustrates data reported in the 2017 Police Violence Report (PVR). This data focuses on race/ethnicity. According to the PVR, whites are the majority of the US population (63.00%), followed by Hispanics (17.00%), African Americans (13.00%), and other (7.00%). For all police killings in the US, whites are still the majority (48.00%), followed by African Americans (27.00%), Hispanics (21.00%), and other (4.00%). Of the police killings, the majority who were unarmed were whites (37.00%), followed by African Americans (35.00%), Hispanics (25.00%), and other (3.00%). The PVR also reported on individuals who were unarmed and not attacking, in which African Americans were the majority (34.00%), followed by whites and Hispanics who tied (32.00%), and other (2.00%).

Table 9: Data on 2017 Police Violence Report

Variables	US Population	All Police Killings	Unarmed	Unarmed and Not Attacking
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>				
White	63%	48%	37%	32%
African American	13%	27%	35%	34%
Hispanic	17%	21%	25%	32%
Other	7%	4%	3%	2%

Table 10 illustrates the frequencies compared from the PVR and the current study. It is important to note that for each category, the PVR is based on the total US population while the current study is based on the total created from the articles used for the current study. Regarding race/ethnicity, while the majority from the PVR is white, in the current study whites are third most likely (63.00% compared to 6.00%, respectively). For African Americans, they are the third most common in the PVR, but the majority of the current study (13.00% compared to 70.00%, respectively). Hispanics rank third most likely in both the PVR and the current study (17.00% compared to 11.00%, respectively). For all other races, both rank fourth in the PVR and the current study (7.00% compared to 3.00%, respectively). Regarding all killings, whites are the most likely killed in the PVR, but third in the current study (48.00% compared to 4.00%, respectively). African Americans are the second most likely of all police killings in the PVR, but the most common in the current study (27.00% compared to 44.00%, respectively). Hispanics rank third in the PVR, but second in the current study (21.00% compared to 8.00%, respectively). All other races ranked fourth in both the PVR and the current study (4.00% compared to 2.00%).

Table 10: Frequencies Compared from Police Violence Report (PVR) and Current Study (CS)

Variables	Frequency (%)		Frequency (%)	
	PVR	CS	PVR	CS
	Population/Total		All Police Killings	
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>				

White	63%	6%	48%	4%
African American	13%	70%	27%	44%
Hispanic	17%	11%	21%	8%
Other	7%	3%	4%	2%
Missing	N/A	10%	N/A	9%

In summary, the findings show that minorities, specifically African Americans, are more likely to be reported in stories involving police-citizen encounters. In fact, as shown in the NYTs, African Americans are reported at disproportionate rates (70%) compared to their total in the population (13%). Further, the findings show that although whites comprise the vast majority of citizens in the United States (63%), they are less likely to be highlighted in stories involving police-citizen relationships in the NYTs (6%). Comparing whites and African Americans, the results of the PVR show that while African Americans are more likely to be killed compared to their total population (27% compared to 13%, respectively), they are even more likely to be reported in the news as being involved in police-citizen encounters. Compared to the majority of policing killings (whites, 48%), the news is more likely to report incidents of African Americans being killed by police officers.

Discussion

Previous research has provided evidence of race-based policing by police officers (Engel & Calnon, 2004; Langton & Durose, 2013; Taniguchi et al., 2017). Past studies have provided numerous reasons for race-based policing such as community context (Kane, 2002; Klinger, 1997; Weitzer, 1999), reasons for negative police encounters (unnecessary traffic stops, verbal abuse, or excessive use of force) that increase negative perceptions of police (Kane, 2005; Terrill & Reisig, 2003; Weitzer, 1999), and individual level characteristics (Cox et al., 2001; Engel &

Calnon, 2004). The current study found similar data to support the evidence of race-based policing.

As shown by the results of the content analysis, the hypotheses of the current study are supported. First, minorities, specifically African Americans, are more likely to be reported in news stories involving police-citizen encounters than whites. White offenders were only reported 6% of the time, while African American offenders were reported 70% of the time. Second, news events involving police-citizen encounters are more likely to report stories involving police officers that were white as opposed to non-white. Specifically, white officers were reported 47% of the time compared to non-white officers being reported 10% of the time. Third, news events involving police-citizen encounters are more likely to feature negative outcomes (e.g., arrests/killings) compared to positive outcomes. Lastly, the results also showed that African Americans are more likely to be killed during a police-citizen encounter than whites.

Overall, the findings support the idea of news value theory that bad and/or controversial news is more likely to be reported, which is why stories involving race-based policing deaths may be more newsworthy. The content analysis also supports the idea that the news media is more likely to report police-citizen encounters that involve minority citizens. As reported in the PVR, the total US population of whites is 63 percent, whereas the total US population of African Americans is only 13 percent. Based on these figures, police officers should be coming into contact with whites approximately 60 percent of the time and coming into contact with African Americans approximately 10 percent of the time. However, according to the content analysis conducted here, 70 percent of the observed cases in the news involved African Americans and only 6 percent of the observed cases involved whites. Based on the US population of African

Americans, reported by the PVR, the media reports police-citizen encounters, involving African Americans, slightly more than 5 times their representation in the population.

One reason why the media may report such a high proportion police-citizen stories involving minority members is the value of news theory. As a newspaper, it is the duty of the New York Times to report articles that may receive the most readership. As noted above, one of the criteria for news value involves stories related to bad or controversial news, which means the NYT are more likely to report stories of police-citizen encounters that end negatively (compared to those that are more positive in nature). Because newspaper stories are the source of information for the current content analysis, it is important to understand data will be based on the interests of the readers. This partially explains why the majority of the articles involved racial tensions or the death of the offender.

The content analysis provided insight into the effect that the theory of news value has on reporting. As stated by Harcup and O'Neil (2001), there is value in bad news. The data supports this assertion by illustrating the number of articles that reported negative police-citizen encounters instead of positive encounters. The data shows that offenders were more likely to be killed than not, confirming the prevalence of negative police-citizen encounters reported in the news. This data is important because it demonstrates how media reporting can impact citizen's perceptions of law enforcement. Cultivation theory shows that the consumption of news by individuals can impact their attitudes and beliefs about social issues. For example, prior research has found that television viewers were more likely to perceive that police misconduct occurred on a regular basis (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007). Based on the results, the media can cause the perception that positive police-citizen encounters are less likely to occur than negative police-citizen encounters because positive encounters are not reported as frequently as negative

encounters. By portraying a majority of negative police-citizen encounters that involve minority members, specifically African Americans, the public may begin to hold values, beliefs, and attitudes that are consistent to what is reported in mass media.

Due to the nature of police-citizen encounters, it is difficult to provide a completely bias free representation of police-citizen encounters. However, by providing the data in multiple ways, the information can be pieced together for a more realistic picture. By combining data from research reported by law enforcement agencies, research reported by independent groups, and research reported through news media, it is easier to compare realistic figures and potential limitations from all three sources. The bias that news value has on reporting can be limited by adding the data together with other sources of reported data. Similarly, the data reported by the news can reduce the limitations of other forms of reporting bias that may occur.

Limitations of the Current Study and Directions for Future Research

While this content analysis provided unique data about race-based policing, there were a number of limitations in the current study. First, not all the information (e.g., officer and offender characteristics) was available/reported in the news stories. In fact, very few articles provided every category of information that was collected in the content analysis. As stated earlier, 44 articles had supplemental information included, and that still did not fill all the information for each category. By having all the information, the coders could have created additional tables and/or investigated bivariate relationships. Second, the current study only accessed stories involving police-citizen encounters from a single news source—*The New York Times*. By only examining one news source, comparisons between the information of different news sources could not be included. This was a problem that occurred at the beginning of the research process because the original goal of the content analysis was to find articles from a national, state, and

local newspaper to compare information on police-citizen encounters. However, searching state and local newspapers did not provide enough content to allow any relevant data to be coded. By examining news articles for a content analysis, the current study was also limited by not obtaining data by talking to police officers or citizens. Discussing police-citizen encounters with both police and citizens could provide new data on the characteristics of police-citizen encounters that the news does not report on. Third, by limiting the search results to the previous 15 years, there was less overall available content to search from. While 100 articles were enough to create a content analysis that would allow researchers to show trends in the data, it was not enough to create an exhaustive content analysis about race-based policing reported by news sources.

In the future, there are several ways to improve upon the current study. First, it is important to gather data from numerous news sources (e.g., national, state, local, etc.). For example, comparing articles from one source to another may reveal that news value changes from source to source. By showing differences in the news value of different news sources, future researchers could provide more information on how much news value can impact reader's perceptions. Similarly, comparing geographic levels of police-citizen encounters could provide more insight into the current issue. If future researchers can find an adequate amount of information within state and local newspapers to create a similar content analysis, researchers might find news value changes not only between news sources, but also based on the geographic scope of the news source. Second, future researchers would benefit by examining content from a longer period of time (e.g., more than 15 years). By increasing the number of years to collect and code content, researchers may be able to show changes in the trends of race-based policing in police-citizen encounters that is reported in the media. Third, future research in this area could

improve on the current study by findings new ways to gather information that is not reported in news stories. For example, one way may be to contact departments of the involved officers to uncover more information on the event reported in the news. A content analysis including all the categories of information of interest may create a more conclusive picture of police-citizen encounters. Lastly, it is recommended that future content analysis and/or other studies on police-citizen encounters survey police officers and citizens to gather data on perceptions of police-citizen encounters. Comparing the survey responses between the police and citizens may provide new data on how the citizen perception of a police-citizen encounter differs from an officer perception of the encounter. By using these two comparisons, the newly complied data could then be compared to the data from the content analysis to show how the data is represented compared to how it is perceived to be represented by officers and citizens.

Policy Recommendations

By examining the results of the content analysis in conjunction with other available data, professionals can create new policies that may reduce negative relationships between the police and citizens. First, it is important for police departments to embrace the community policing model. The current research can be used by policy makers to create news ways for law enforcement to interact with the community that will improve the police-citizen relationships in adverse communities (e.g., disadvantaged, high crime). In 1990, a study was conducted to examine violent crime rates across 164 American cities. The results showed that proactive policing approaches reduce rates of crime over time (MacDonald, 2002, p. 604). By better understanding that a race-based policing problem exists within the community, policy makers are better equipped to create policies that avoid negative police-citizen encounters by promoting community involvement.

A second policy recommendation can be found in the concept of procedural justice.

Previous research illustrates when police officers are procedurally just in their encounters with citizens, police-public relationships tend to be more positive (Engel, 2005; Mazerolle, Antrobus, Bennett, & Tyler, 2013; Nix et al., 2014; Sahin, Braga, Apel, & Brunson, 2017; Wolfe, Nix, Kaminski, & Rojek, 2015). The creation of new procedural justice policies can help produce a better relationship between police and disadvantaged communities, specifically predominately African American communities who feel they are treated unjust by current police practices. The evidence of race-based policing provides justification for minorities, specifically African Americans, feelings of injustice that can be improved through new procedural justice policies.

Conclusion

Regardless of the current study's limitations, this content analysis created a unique perspective on the issue of race-based policing and also provided insight into the effect that media portrayal can have on citizen's attitudes and perceptions. The content analysis provides information that can be used by future researchers as a guideline to create a more conclusive content analysis of police-citizen encounters. The results of the content analysis coincided with the hypothesized outcome that minorities, specifically African Americans, are involved in police-citizen encounters at rates disproportionate to their total in the population. The content analysis also showed that because of the value of news criteria, articles report offender's deaths at a higher rate. While African Americans are only 13.00% of the population, they were reported by the NYT at a rate higher than 5 times that of their population. Similarly, of the observed situations, it was more likely for offenders to be killed than not, bolstering support for news value theory. Overall, the content analysis allows readers to better understand the impact of

negative police-citizen encounters, as well as the power the media has on impacting citizen's perceptions.

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